



How much 'hua' do you feel today?

It has to start with a first question - who? This question stumbles across our mind a few times daily, we cross paths with strangers and supposed acquaintances; but more prominently, we ask ourselves who we are. This may be a little more striking for us here in Singapore, a country of diaspora islanders. Or it at least is for Singapore Artists and the initiator of this exhibition, Meng, as they conversed in their first meeting. From there a theme was devised for an exhibition that sets itself as an introductory letter from China's forthrinning contemporary artists to art in Southeast Asia.

It is a funny situation that Meng envisions, the Chinese mainlanders and the Chinese diaspora face to face, inspecting each others' similarities. It is a caricature of post-globalisation that our relationship with our past becomes a banter of 'How much "hua" do you feel today?'. The essence of this reflection comes in inquisitions of dualism. Is 'hua' a choice, or is it nature, or it can be just a comment imposed by others. When faced with this question, artists in the group show avoided answering it in all ways possible. Most tackled it with a bit of humour, incorporating puns and metaphors that in their own way questions the word 'hua' itself. For our english readers, as much as the puns themselves are not to do their job translated, I can at least explain that the chinese character 'hua' refers to the english word 'chinese', while the chinese picked this word to represent their race (after coming up with the idea of a

chinese race, of course), possibly because of its more ancient meanings: glory, beauty, flower, greatness.

Through reflecting the various emotions and perspectives of Chinese from around the world, 'How much "hua" do you feel today?' questions the impact of cultural background in art making and how the scope of art is expanded through a variety of life stories and their collaboration. Making use of an array of mediums from paintings, sculptures to installations, animations and gestures, artworks from the exhibition '*How much "hua" do you feel today?*' answers the question it poses in canny ways like the verbal answers which came out from the mouths of participating artists.



Guo Gong's sculpture, *Qie Wen* - to cut and to ask, one side jagged layers of matte steel and the other side reflective, brings this duality to the viewers who, circling this piece, sometimes see themselves and sometimes not. *Pine No. 5*, an installation of a pine tree that opens up like a scroll, tells the relationship between nature and civilisation.

Meng Zhigang's painting, *Magnificent Territory*, encapsulates a photorealistic metallic dome. Its original identity is only known to the artist, while viewers ponder not about the dome, but the intricate chinese ink painting that traces its surface. Meng speaks of 'hua' in uncertainty. As a ethnic minority in mainland China, Meng finds himself torn between his interest for the archaic, the land he dwells from and the political imposition of it all. Similar themes are represented in the *Subcelestial Touch* series that puts together unnamed objects and traditional images.

Then there are works by artist **Deng Dafei**. Using an exceptionally long scroll of bamboo paper, Deng records in physicality the rugged stone ground of the empty

plots of land where household buildings used to be. The fast-paced society in China leaves behind oldness, or rather, old worn-out architecture is speedily removed to give space for new infrastructures, if not to refresh the skyline and feed to a newly implemented vision of advancements. Deng also made *Ancestors of Legge*, this false artefact of history seems like an ancient Chinese documentation, where only upon close inspection one finds out about the absurd tale of a fictional man who is related to all religious figures the world has ever had.

This sense of humour is shared with **Yun Lin**, who juxtaposes the focus frame of a digital camera with ancient pink painting in *Xiake Losing Focus*, teasing the relationship between modernity and antiquity.

Li Shun's interest lies in the combination of current life and the past. In *Study on the nature of things - Orioles singing in the willows*, he pieces together everyday objects to form chinese calligraphy and explores the relationship between past and present. *Internet Sketch - brave new world - Flowers* and *Oceanic Scroll - Tarantula* both compares printed marks with hand-made marks, putting similar images aside each other to ponder their differences.

Including works by artists Wu Junyong, Shang Ming, Hans Chew, Chen Yufan, Chang Qing, Zhang Zheyi, Jon Koko, Li Wei, Gao Zhenpeng, Zou Zhao

How much 'hua' do you feel today? is currently showing in Highlight Art, 72 Club St from 22 November to 2023.

About Highlight Art

Highlight Art space was founded in 2001. Since our establishment, we have been committed to exhibiting and supporting the development of Asian contemporary art. Highlight Art is a comprehensive private art consulting company, that provides customised services for private collectors or enterprises, such as art consultation for collection, sales and other services.

In recent years, Highlight Art's business has also expanded into the field of public art and has established a professional team of artists and curators, having driven and accomplished many public art projects for local governments and commercial real estate companies.

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Gallery hours:
Tuesday - Saturday
11 am - 6 pm

or by appointment

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